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CIA rating slips under Turner

By James Coates
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WASHINGTON — Adm. Stansfield Turner is having a lousy time running the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for his old Naval Academy classmate Jimmy Carter.

When he isn't reading about leaks in the press clippings his staff hands him each morning, there is time to deal with Carter's complaints that he's "dissatisfied" over the "quality" of CIA's intelligence.

Some of the things which crossed Turner's desk in recent months:

- CIA officials admitted during the trial of convicted spy William Kampiles in Hammond, Ind., that the agency lost track of 13 copies of the same satellite manual that Kampiles supplied the Soviet KGB.

- The White House leaked a story to reporters that one of Turner's top analysts, David Sullivan, had supplied aides of Sen. Henry Jackson (D., Wash.), with classified documents on arms negotiations with the Soviets.

- Turner was forced to renew Sullivan's top secret clearance after Sullivan joined the staff of Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D., Texas), a Jackson ally.

- Carter sent Turner a handwritten note expressing presidential dismay that the CIA had advised the White House it foresaw no problems in Iran just days before the civil strife erupted.

- Debate continued among former CIA directors and other intelligence community figures on reports that the spy agency has been infiltrated at a high level by a mole — a U. S. version of British traitor Kim Philby who loyally served England's MI-6 for decades until he reached the top and then started feeding information to Moscow.

Turner is the fifth man to sit in the CIA director's chair in six years — a point some agency employees mention when asked about morale.

They also point out that the Senate soon will consider a bill to reorganize the agency, rewrite key laws under which it operates, and expose the already overexposed spy shop to still more public scrutiny.

Clips are scanned

Turner gave reporters a hint of his own morale over lunch recently at the National Press Club when he said, "In the 19 months that I have been director of the CIA, I have come into the habit of screening the press clips first thing every morning. I almost hold my breath until I know if today's disclosures include some of our sensitive sources of intelligence."

"Sometimes it comes out as a leak, sometimes from the forced testimony of one of our officers in court, and sometimes from the subpoena of a document or notes."

One outspoken and knowledgeable former CIA executive, James J. Angleton, recently sent a newsletter to friends in the intelligence community. It began, "The disgraceful and dangerous decline of the prestige and vigilance of our intelligence community has never been so marked as at this hour."

Three years and three CIA directors ago, Angleton was fired as chief of the agency's counterintelligence unit as House and Senate committees began disclosing illegal CIA operations within U. S. borders.

Those hearings, conducted by Sen. Frank Church (D., Idaho), and Rep. Otis Pike (D., N. Y.), were a media bombshell. Thousands of secrets were made public. TV viewers saw Church brandish an air gun designed by the CIA to fire deadly poison darts; there were disclosures the agency kept illegal files on 10,000 Americans, and it was learned that the CIA tried to get the Mafia to kill Cuba's Fidel Castro.

The CIA's prestige plummeted. Morale at the agency's headquarters in suburban Langley, Va., sank.

CIA Director Richard Helms was sent to Iran as U. S. ambassador. William Colby replaced Helms; removed Angleton and then himself removed in favor of Republican National Chairman George Bush. Carter won the presidency and replaced Bush with Turner.

Many, many leaks

And through it all were the leaks. The first was Philip Agee, who today is perhaps the most hated man at Langley. Agee spied for the CIA, posing as an Olympic games official, and later began publishing lists of every clandestine CIA agent he knew. One of Agee's targets — the CIA station chief in Athens, Richard Welch — was killed after his tie to the agency was exposed.

More secrets about the agency's methods and sources leaked in books by another defector from the agency's ranks, Victor Marchetti. CIA officials confided in congressmen that intelligence agencies in other countries were refusing to cooperate with U. S. agents.

Agents carefully recruited in the field began resigning, telling the Americans they feared their names would surface in one of the many leaks.

Turner said an allied spy agency which he refused to name had recently backed out of a proposed spy operation with the CIA.

"It (the foreign spy agency) did so," Turner said, "when reminded that I must notify eight committees of Congress of every covert action. They could not imagine that the plan would not leak."

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